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ABSTRACT

A study assessed the feasibility of marketing adult and continuing education in Great Britain. Data on public attitudes toward adult/continuing education were collected from: (1) a survey of persons living in inner London, in an industrial environment, and in a rural area; (2) interviews with senior academic staff from six Further Education Unit (FEU) colleges; and (3) a random sample of companies and community organizations that were somehow involved in providing adult/continuing education. Based on the responses given by the members of the general public who were surveyed, adult education appears to have the image of a service that caters primarily to personal interests and leisure time enjoyment. The public tended to express a high degree of interest in introductory courses and felt that it was useful to publicize courses in local newspapers. The senior academic staff perceived marketing in adult education primarily in terms of promotion and publicity and seemed less aware of the role of research, needs assessment, and evaluation of program effectiveness. The local employers interviewed believed that the adult education service was doing a good job but that the service was not directly relevant to their concerns. Representatives of community organizations, on the other hand, viewed adult education as a service that shared their own aims and constituted a major source of support for them. (Appendixes include sample details for the public attitudes survey and college and industry/community interviews.) (MN)

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ED287067

A Project Report

# MARKETING ADULT/CONTINUING EDUCATION

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FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT

# MARKETING ADULT/CONTINUING EDUCATION

A feasibility study

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FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT

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# CONTENTS


| | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| | Foreword | v |
| | Executive Checklist | viii |
| 1. | **INTRODUCTION** | 1 |
| | Research objectives | 1 |
| | Methodology and sample | 2 |
| | The analysis | 4 |
| 2. | **SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS** | 5 |
| 3. | **RECOMMENDATIONS** | 14 |
| 4. | **PUBLIC ATTITUDES** | 19 |
| | Current involvement in adult/continuing education | 19 |
| | Previous involvement in adult/continuing education | 21 |
| | Local adult/continuing education providers | 23 |
| | General interest in courses | 26 |
| | Likelihood of enrolling | 29 |
| | Courses likely to consider | 29 |
| | Improvements by colleges | 30 |
| | Attitudes toward adult/continuing education | 31 |
| | Awareness of advertising | 34 |
| | Further information | 36 |
| | Usefulness of promotions | 37 |
| 5. | **THE INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE** | 38 |
| | Current understanding of marketing | 38 |
| | Current marketing activities | 39 |
| | Marketing inputs for courses | 41 |
| | Monitoring student attitudes | 44 |
| | Methods of communication and promotion | 44 |
| | Distinguishing characteristics of AE providers | 48 |
| | Suggested improvements to marketing | 49 |
| 6. | **EMPLOYERS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS** | 51 |
| | Employers | 51 |
| | Community organisations | 56 |
| | **APPENDIX** | 61 |
| | Sample Details | 62 |

# FOREWORD

(i) In 1984 the FEU commissioned H R & H Marketing Research International Limited to undertake a review of marketing activities in FE colleges. The report resulting from this study, *Marketing FE* (FEU, 1985), advocates stronger support for the marketing function in colleges, including the development of overall marketing strategies and the co-ordination and systematic application of formal procedures.

(ii) The methods used in the college study have now been applied to the field of adult/continuing education, and this report is the result. Six agencies which provide adult/continuing education participated. As well as conducting interviews with these providers, local employers and representatives of community organisations, the researchers carried out a small sample survey of public attitudes in three selected localities.

(iii) Some of the main findings which emerge from this study are:

a) *Public attitudes*

— It is possible to carry out a survey of public attitudes within a local area at relatively modest expense. Useful findings may emerge from this: public attitudes and educational experience, the effectiveness of publicity, and public needs and wants.

— Adult education appears at present to have the public image of a service primarily catering for personal interests and enjoyment as a leisure-time activity.

— The public believes that programmes are most usefully publicised in local newspapers, and there is a high level of interest in introductory courses.

b) *Senior academic staff*

— Marketing in adult education is perceived primarily in terms of promotion and publicity; there is less awareness of the role of research and analysis of needs, and evaluation of effectiveness.

— Respondents identified a need for training and support for the development of marketing skills, but saw that lack of resources generally imposed limitations on the overall effectiveness of marketing activities.

c) *Local employers*

— Employers believed that the adult education service was doing a good job, but one not directly relevant to their concerns.

— Although they looked primarily to further education to meet their needs, employers saw scope for improvement in the marketing of adult education to industry.

d) *Representatives of community organisations*

— Representatives of local community organisations saw adult education as a service which shared their aims and constituted a major source of support for them.

— Resources were seen as inadequate to meet demands, and there was uncertainty as to whether the distribution of resources was genuinely even-handed and responsive to needs.

(iv) To many in adult education these findings are not surprising. The perceptions of the employers are supportive but they obviously do not instinctively turn to this sector. Throughout the report is a persistent reference to the need for more resources. Over the last decade providers of adult education have been faced with an increasing range of demands for their services – adult basic education, industrial language training, inner city developments, European Social Fund projects, PICKUP, RE-PLAN, the MSC-sponsored Adult Training Programme. The response to these demands is being made in a wider context of restriction on expenditure and the strain shows through.

(v) This report is deliberately limited in its scope, but it is doubtful whether a more comprehensive survey would have produced different results. As with their colleagues in FHE colleges, staff in adult education need to widen their concept of marketing. The FEU/FESC handbook* should be helpful in this respect. Generally however, as this study found, the various remits of adult education tend to be very wide, not to say ill-defined. A wide range of skills is required simply to develop and implement effective programmes. This awareness and application of marketing concepts have to take their place alongside other skills. Those involved in this study believe, however, that the concepts of marketing applied to curriculum processes such as needs analysis, delivery, and evaluation offer a useful tool for the design of responsive provision.

(vi) This report gives some useful guidance in marketing adult education. The load will inevitably fall on the relatively few members of full-time staff that provide adult and continuing education. This poses for institutional managers real issues of resource allocation or reallocation. It is hoped that this report will assist in determining priorities.

**Marketing Further and Higher Education* Longman for FEU/FESC, 1985

(vii) I draw readers' attention to the executive checklist at the front of this publication. This is intended to identify the main issues and pose important questions raised by this document; it should be particularly valuable for senior management in LEAs and colleges.

Jack Mansell
Chief Officer
Further Education Unit

# EXECUTIVE CHECKLIST

Messages for Management

1. Do staff have professional marketing skills, and is support being given for the development of these?

2. Are staff able to obtain professional marketing advice if the need arises?

3. Is the marketing function of adult education providers required in organisational terms, both by supporting budgets and the rough organisational roles and committee structure? Adoption of marketing plans.

4. Are providers maintaining a database and files which make information on the community they are serving readily accessible?

5. Are providers maintaining a database on students, and monitoring responses before, during and after participation in courses?

6. What steps are being taken to maintain a dialogue with local groups and to enable them to become involved in the development of learning programmes?

7. Are institutions planning public relations on a corporate basis and targeting their promotional activities?

8. Are providers carrying out systematic research on the attitudes, expectations, needs and wants of the general public in their areas?

9. Are institutions collaborating with each other to share the full benefits of marketing research and promotion? What formal arrangements have been made to support such collaboration?

10. Are the resources available to institutions adequate and suitable to meet the expectations engendered as a result of effective marketing?

# 1. INTRODUCTION

1. Towards the end of 1984, the Further Education Unit commissioned HR&H Marketing Research International Ltd to conduct a feasibility study into the marketing of Further Education. (The final report on this study was published by the FEU in July 1985.) This study had as its main objective to establish the extent to which an external marketing researcher (at modest cost) could advise and support FE colleges in their marketing.

2. The FE Feasibility Study established that, in the context of FE, research is an integral part of the marketing process, involving:

- systematic collection of data relating to the needs and wants of various 'publics' or targets
- measurement or assessment of the effectiveness or relevance to the targets of the resulting 'services' (course offerings)
- measurement or assessment of promotional activities and publicity materials

3. The study found that FE colleges were already involved in a wide range of marketing and research activities, but that three principal elements were lacking:

- an overall marketing strategy or policy
- co-ordination of efforts and activities
- systematic application of formal procedures

4. This report presents the detailed findings of another feasibility study relating to Adult/Continuing Education.

## Research objectives

5. The overall objectives of the present study were set by the FEU as follows:

- to explore the extent to which marketing Adult/Continuing Education possesses distinctive features which differentiate it from marketing FE
- to identify the processes that are required to improve the marketing of Adult/Continuing Education
- to demonstrate the extent to which a modestly funded external consultant can provide practical advice on marketing to Adult Education Institutions

6. Within this overall framework, the specific objectives of the study were:

- to examine public perceptions of the role of Adult/Continuing Education, and of the importance of adult learning

— to identify the resources available to Adult Education agencies to undertake marketing research
— to highlight ways in which a full range of marketing activities may support and supplement advertising and publicity

## Methodology and sample

*General*

7. In order to best meet the objectives set by the FEU within the budgetary constraints imposed, HR&H recommended that three separate yet complementary surveys should be conducted:

— a survey of public attitudes towards Adult/Continuing Education
— a survey of industry and community leaders
— a survey among Heads of Department and other senior staff in Adult Education Institutions

8. Six institutions were approached by FEU and invited to participate in the project, these being:

| | |
|---|---|
| Rugby | — East Warwickshire College of Further Education |
| London | — Tower Hamlets Adult Education Institute |
| Brighton | — Friends Centre |
| Rochdale | — State Mill Centre |
| Hull | — Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Hull |
| Somerset | — Community Education Department, Holyrood School, Chard |

9. A round-table discussion with representatives of the six participating institutions was held at the FEU offices on 20th January 1984. This meeting served to develop the brief and provide input for the surveys conducted by HR&H.

*The studies*

10. *Study A. Public Attitudes* Interviews were conducted with a representative cross-section of the population served by three of the six participating institutions. For reasons of cost-effectiveness it was not possible to conduct this study in all six locations. The areas chosen were:

— Tower Hamlets (an inner London area)
— Rochdale (industrial environment)
— Somerset (rural environment)

11. A target of 100 interviews in each catchment area was set, with the samples being controlled in terms of age, sex and social grade in line with national census data for each area.

12. Interviews were conducted in the respondent's own home, interviewers working in accordance with:

— a personal briefing
— a structured questionnaire
— written instructions

13. *Study B. The Institutional Perspective* Senior staff were put forward by their Principal or Vice Principal for interview by an executive of HR&H.

A target of six interviews within each institution was set; the interviews were conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire.

14. *Study C. Industry/Community Leaders* The participating institutions were asked by HR&H to supply details of companies and community organisations within their catchment area and with whom the institution had some involvement, either in terms of provision of Adult/Continuing Education or in terms of joint initiatives.

15. HR&H contacted companies/organisations from these lists on a random basis, and interviewed:

— the person with responsibility for educational and training issues (community organisation leader interviews)
— the Managing Director/Proprietor/Marketing Director/Personnel or Training Manager (employer interviews)

16. A target of six interviews in each catchment area was set, conducted by interviewers working in accordance with:

— a personal briefing
— a semi-structured questionnaire
— written instructions

*Fieldwork*

17. All interviews were conducted during February and March 1986.

*Sample details*

18. Details of respondents interviewed in each survey can be found in Appendix A.

*The questionnaire*

19. Copies of the questionnaires used are available on request from FEU.

*Standards*

20. This project was conducted in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Marketing Research Society of Great Britain.

## The analysis

*Study A – Public attitudes*

21. Data from this survey was analysed by computer and is presented in a separate volume in the form of statistical tables.

*Studies B and C*

22. These being largely semi-structured and qualitative surveys, each respondent's answer to a specific question was compared and contrasted with those of the total sample. This method of analysis enables various hypotheses and conclusions to be made, illustrated where appropriate with verbatim comments. This analysis was carried out by the executives responsible for the study.

# 2. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

## Public attitudes

23. 14 per cent of the sample were currently involved in an adult or continuing education course, class or group; 32 per cent were not currently involved but had taken a course at some time in the past, and 54 per cent had never taken a class at all. The level of uptake of courses is higher in Rochdale and Somerset than in Tower Hamlets, as the table below shows:

| | *TOTAL* | *ROCHDALE* | *SOMERSET* | *TOWER HAMLETS* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % | % |
| *CURRENTLY INVOLVED* | *14* | *14* | *16* | *12* |
| The first time | 5 | 3 | 9 | 4 |
| One or two courses before | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| Courses about once a year | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Courses much of the time | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 |
| *COURSES IN PAST, BUT NOT CURRENTLY* | *32* | *37* | *35* | *24* |
| One or two courses before | 23 | 25 | 25 | 19 |
| Courses about once a year | 4 | 3 | 5 | 3 |
| Courses much of the time | 2 | 5 | — | 2 |
| (DK/NA) | 3 | 4 | 5 | — |
| *NEVER TAKEN A COURSE* | *54* | *48* | *49* | *64* |

24. For those currently taking an adult or continuing education course, the main subjects/areas were:

- sports/gymnastics/keep fit/yoga
- English language/literature
- computer studies
- foreign languages
- painting/pottery/sculpture

The main reasons given for wanting to take these particular courses were:

- for personal interest and enjoyment
- for personal gain (e.g. a useful hobby)
- to improve job prospects
- to gain knowledge required at work
- to keep fit/lose weight
- something to do in one's spare time

25. Those not currently taking a course or class but who had been involved in a course or class in the past gave very similar answers to those currently involved, in respect of:

— types of subject taken
— reasons for studying

26. Respondents were asked which of a list of AE providers locally:

— they had ever attended
— they had seen advertising or publicity for
— was the most convenient to get to

| | *STATE MILL CENTRE* (Rochdale) % | *HOLYROOD SCHOOL* (Somerset) % | *ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE* (Tower Hamlets) % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ever attended | — | 20 | 8 |
| Seen advertising for | 28 | 76 | 29 |
| The most convenient | 13 | 98 | 37 |

27. The State Mill Centre in Rochdale is relatively new, hence no one reported having taken a course there, however advertising had been seen. The centre does appear to be less convenient to get to than several other AE providers locally.

28. Holyrood School's Community Education Department had been attended by 20 per cent, and occupies a central point in the community in terms of convenience. Advertising had been seen by over three quarters of respondents.

29. 8 per cent had been to Tower Hamlets AEI and 29 per cent had seen advertising. The Institute was the most convenient of the providers locally to get to.

30. When shown a list of possible courses and classes a local AE institution could provide, those generating the most interest were:

— sports/gymnastics/keep fit/yoga
— cookery/catering
— foreign languages
— car maintenance
— carpentry/DIY
— dressmaking/tailoring/sewing
— computer studies
— handicrafts
— painting/sculpture/pottery

31. When asked how likely they would be to enrol in a course or class in the foreseeable future:

— 16 per cent were very likely
— 20 per cent were quite likely
— 28 per cent were not very likely
— 36 per cent were not at all likely

32. For those who were very or quite likely to enrol, the main reason would be for personal interest or enjoyment. Other important reasons would be:

— to further their education
— something to do in spare time
— to improve job prospects
— to meet people

33. The main reasons for being unlikely (i.e. not very or not at all likely) to enrol were mainly lack of time and lack of interest in the courses available. Other reasons concerned age and health, young children in the household, and fear of going out at night.

34. Of the 64 per cent who were not very or not at all likely to enrol in the foreseeable future, just under half (48 per cent) would never consider enrolling, whilst 52 per cent might consider the possibility.

35. Those who, whilst not likely to enrol in the foreseeable future, do not actually reject the possibility outright, suggested the following as things institutions could do to make it easier for them to consider enrolling:

— advertise in press or Jobcentres
— put courses on at more convenient times
— lower prices/fees
— free transport
— creche facilities

36. Among those who were 'very' or 'quite likely' to enrol, the main attitudes towards adult education (as measured by their level of agreement with each of a series of statements) were:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'It's a good way to meet people' | (99 per cent agree) |
| 'There's something for everyone' | (93 per cent agree) |
| 'They are for people like me' | (86 per cent agree) |
| 'They are very good value for money' | (73 per cent agree) |
| 'It helps me with my job' | (60 per cent agree) |

37. Among those who were 'not very' or 'not at all likely' to enrol, the main attitudes towards adult education were:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'I don't have time to go on these courses' | (67 per cent agree) |
| 'I don't know enough about them to decide' | (54 per cent agree) |
| 'I don't need any qualifications' | (51 per cent agree) |

38. A majority of these respondents *disagreed* that:

— they wouldn't like the people in the class
— the college was too difficult to get to
— they're not for people like them
— they were not interested in any of the courses typically offered

39. All respondents were asked about their general attitudes to adult education, strongest agreement was expressed for the statements:

'I need more information about the classes'
'If there was an introductory course I would go'

40. Some respondents thought the courses too long, and around 25 per cent thought the cost of courses prohibitive. 19 per cent said they would never consider enrolling, and 39 per cent agreed they would probably never 'get around to enrolling'.

41. A total of 62 per cent of respondents had seen some form of advertising or publicity for adult education classes or courses offered locally. This advertising/publicity had been mainly seen in:

| | |
|---|---|
| — newspapers | (58%) |
| — leaflets through the door | (21%) |
| — public libraries | (16%) |
| — local schools | ( 9%) |

and, in Somerset only, in the 'Cresta' magazines (53 per cent).

42. Advertising which had been seen had given details of courses, times and dates, fees and prices, enrolment procedures and location.

43. Asked what sorts of information they would want to know in order to consider enrolling, the main suggestions were:

— course fees/costs
— times and dates
— coverage or extent of the course
— course syllabus details
— length (duration) of course
— location of college/availability of transport
— personal details of the course tutor

44. Promotional devices institutions could use to communicate information about their courses were rated for their usefulness by respondents. The most useful ones are:

| | |
|---|---|
| — local newspaper advertising | (91% useful) |
| — college stand or display at public events etc | (86% useful) |
| — leaflets or posters in libraries, shops etc | (83% useful) |
| — direct mail/through letterbox | (77% useful) |
| — education advice shops | (73% useful) |
| — through friends or relatives | (60% useful) |
| — local radio advertising | (54% useful) |

## The institutional perspective

45. The need for marketing in AE is generally accepted. Basic marketing concepts vary widely and are not well understood.

46. The main marketing activities currently undertaken include (in descending order):

— prospectus
— course leaflets
— local press advertising/editorial articles
— open days
— local radio broadcasts
— development and maintenance of personal contacts

47. Developing and maintaining a range of personal contacts with local community leaders and employers was widely said to be a major priority. A major limitation on this and other marketing activities is *lack of resources in terms of time, remission from teaching duties, and funding*.

48. The various publicity materials were said to be regularly distributed (in descending order) to or through:

— Jobcentres
— community centres and associations
— schools
— libraries
— door to door
— in the high street or shopping centre
— to local employers

49. In most of the institutions, marketing activities were organised at the establishment level, with departments typically producing only their own course leaflets and information. In some establishments, the departmental

structure is not rigidly defined, so that more senior staff are Area Heads rather than Heads of Department. In these establishments, responsibility for and control of marketing is more directly exercised on an institution-wide basis.

50. Establishments identify the main targets for marketing inputs (for ensuring courses meet needs) as:

- the local community (i.e. potential adult learners)
- local employers
- local community organisations
- trades unions
- the unemployed
- ethnic minority groups

51. Institutions vary widely in the importance they attach to consulting (and therefore meeting the needs of) each of these groups, this depending on:

- the nature of the local community
- the nature of local industry
- the stated aims or objectives of the particular establishment

52. Systematic or formal follow-ups of past students are virtually non-existent, with providers tending to rely mainly on chance encounters for feedback. Feedback is acknowledged to be extremely useful, and would be valuable for identifying specific course deficiencies and for increasing staff job satisfaction.

53. Considerably more time and effort goes into consulting present students on their reactions to their course. This is seen to have benefits in terms of course assessment and modification, and staff assessment and encouragement. Students are consulted on a group or one-to-one basis and, less commonly, in staff–student meetings. Few instances of the use of survey questionnaires were reported. Lack of time and resources appears to prohibit further activity in this area.

54. The main communication methods used are:

- the prospectus or brochures
- course leaflets

Many respondents acknowledged the need to improve the general appearance and professionalism of these materials.

55. For targeting the local community in general, newspaper advertising, open days and other ad hoc events are widely used.

56. For targeting local employers, printed materials are supplemented by personal contacts, and contact through employer organisations and associations.

57. For special interest groups such as organisations representing ethnic minorities, some publicity materials are translated, and some institutions seek to get involved in multicultural events.

58. Where the unemployed are seen to be a major target, institutions seek a wider presence in Jobcentres and attempt to work more closely with the MSC and other bodies.

Other successful promotional activities include:

— a promotional video
— a week-long free teach-in
— a sports open day
— public service television broadcasts

59. The main improvements to marketing perceived as being needed were:

— a general increase in resources
— increased funding for marketing
— higher priority or status attached to the marketing function

60. Implicit in the latter suggestion was the perceived need for professional marketing advice, to co-ordinate activities and to increase the professionalism of staff in this area.

61. There was also a suggestion that competing AE providers should consider acting more often as a local network, to avoid duplication of effort and unnecessary overlap in terms of provision, and to share resources for publicity.

## Employers' perspective

62. Industry has a very high opinion of education generally, as a means of:

— providing necessary skills and training
— promoting loyalty to the company
— giving employees a wider perspective on the importance of their work
— generally increasing employee motivation

63. The majority of employers' needs are currently more or less adequately met by in-house training, and by colleges of Further or Higher Education. Adult and Continuing Education does not come to mind naturally as a provider of work-related training. Whilst employers do value highly the importance of education for its own sake, Adult Education providers are not thought to offer vocational or skills-based training.

64. The difference between Adult Education and Continuing Education has little meaning for most employers, since the non-vocational component is presumed to be at the fore.

65. As employers are generally only interested in education providers who offer something specific or relevant to their business, it is clear that some providers are not promoting their capabilities in a way which will have an impact or make an impression on industry. Whilst some AE providers openly acknowledge that, in their case, industry is not an appropriate target and act accordingly, some others claim to regard industry as important and yet industry remains largely unaware of their capabilities.

66. Nonetheless, adult education was praised highly for its obvious commitment to the community and for the range and quality of its offerings (where these are known about). At the same time, some providers were criticised for failure to anticipate and meet the needs of industry, failure to communicate with and target to industry, and in some cases for poor quality communication and contact.

## Community organisations' perspective

67. The various community organisation representatives interviewed had an extremely high regard for adult and continuing education, believing that:

- AE serves the community in general
- AE promotes the self-improvement of the individual
- AE improves the quality of life of a community

68. Adult Education providers and community organisations appeared in most cases to work well together because they were both seeking to assist the same groups within society, and had common aims and objectives.

69. Contact and communication between them was said to be more extensive, more frequent and of a higher quality than between adult education and industry.

70. Satisfaction with a particular AE provider tended to depend on:

- the economic and social health of the community in general
- the perceived lack of resources of the AE provider in relation to local demand

Thus, the more pressing the needs of the community in general, and of specific groups within that community, the more difficult it becomes for AE providers to adequately meet their needs.

71. Since, as with employers, community organisations are inevitably only actively interested in provision which meets their own specific needs, where resources are stretched a frequent complaint is that resource allocation is biased or misplaced. This fact underlines the obvious importance of going out into the community and maintaining a vigorous dialogue with local groups.

72. AE providers were praised for their:

- commitment to the community
- quality and range of course offerings
- quality of publicity and course leaflets
- staff attitude
- welcoming atmosphere at their establishment

73. AE providers were criticised on three grounds:

- insufficient promotional activity (underlining the importance of regular targeting, carried out on a systematic basis)
- excessive bureaucracy (in some cases the system is felt to be unresponsive despite the best intentions of staff, leading to an impression of inertia)
- an inability or reluctance by some staff to communicate with and relate to ethnic minority groups and other specific groups within society

# 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

74. The features of marketing of Further Education which are discussed in the report *Marketing FE* (FEU/1985) appear from this research to be valid also for the marketing of Adult/Continuing Education.

The former report recommended that there was little value in viewing marketing research or market research as activities separate from marketing, in the context of FE. Research should be an integral part of the marketing process, involving:

- the systematic collection of data relating to the needs and wants of various publics or targets
- the measurement or assessment of the effectiveness or relevance to the targets of the resulting courses
- the measurement or assessment of promotional activities and publicity materials

75. FE colleges were seen to be already involved in a range of marketing activities, but lacked three main elements:

- an overall marketing strategy or policy
- co-ordination of efforts and activities
- systematic application of procedures

It was acknowledged that reallocation of resources would be advantageous in achieving these objectives.

76. Our main recommendation is that Adult and Continuing Education, in the area of marketing and the need for marketing, can be seen as a subset of Further Education. Similar marketing principles apply, even though Adult and Continuing Education possesses features generally which differentiate it from Further Education, giving it an image and a purpose unique to itself.

77. The main differences between Adult and Further Education appear to concern the wider remit of AE to provide a community service, and the variety of targets or 'publics' which AE addresses.

78. Attitudes towards Adult and Continuing Education amongst the general public were found to be positive. Less than one-fifth of those interviewed were uninterested in AE on all counts. Since only a similar proportion of the public were currently involved in Adult Education classes or courses there seems to be considerable scope for development.

79. Within AE institutions, much can and should be done, in terms of:

- — giving greater recognition to the marketing function and taking steps to overcome the lack of marketing expertise
- — co-ordination and assessment of marketing activities
  - preparation of a marketing plan
  - allocation of a marketing budget
  - careful review of existing publicity material
- — follow-up and evaluation of students
- — careful assessment of the priorities or targets to which the institution addresses itself
- — where practical, adopting a co-operative approach together with other local AE providers

Time, resources and funding constraints are obvious problems which can currently inhibit these developments.

80. Adult and Continuing Education should carefully examine its attitude towards employers and industry generally. Whether or not to attempt to cater for the needs of industry in terms of vocational and skills-based courses should be the result of a conscious considered decision. Institutions need to assess their own resources and capabilities in this area and examine the extent to which local industry is adequately catered for by other education providers locally.

81. Adult and Continuing Education should continue to develop its role within the community by acting co-operatively with local organisations with which it has aims in common.

82. We would make the following recommendations for systematic action:

(i) *Establish and maintain a full community (and where relevant, industry) database*. This involves the central collection of data relating to the types of organisation (or businesses) within the institution's catchment area; their current educational and training requirements, and projected future requirements.

(ii) *Establish and maintain a full community (or industry) file*, containing names of organisations/companies and key individuals. This will facilitate regular targeting.

(iii) *Establish and maintain a student database*. Find out where students come from; how they first heard about the course; reasons for enrolling. Systematic follow-up of students after leaving the course to establish their subsequent attitudes (or employment record) and assessments of their courses.

(iv) *Identify the needs and wants of local groups (or industry)* by means of: regular dialogue; a programme of developing new contacts; the creation of a favourable climate for discussion. Facilitate internal communication of this information.

(v) *Meet the needs of local groups (or industry)* by encouraging outside involvement in course development.

(vi) *Public relations*. Formal supervision of a regular programme of events (open days, careers conventions, talks and visits). Consider the publicity value of case histories.

(vii) *Targeting*. Regularly updated mailing list for all literature and written communications.

(viii) *Corporate identity*. There is always scope for improving the appearance and attractiveness of publicity material. Adopt a uniform style for all publicity materials. Discuss the role of the institution at the community level and, if appropriate, the regional level.

## Co-ordination and direction

83. In working towards a market-orientated approach, the above objectives could best be achieved by:

— appointing a full-time marketing professional, to implement policy, represent the interests of the college and its departments
— appointing (alternatively) a marketing council or team, with representatively drawn members to have specific functions, e.g. co-ordination, publicity, schools liaison, etc.
— allocation of a marketing budget which adequately reflects marketing requirements and obligations
— preparation of a formal marketing/marketing communications plan

84. The advice or services of professional consultants could be used by AE in furthering several objectives:

— collection of data relating to needs and wants
— measurement or assessment of the effectiveness or relevance of courses to their targets
— measurement or assessment of promotional activities and publicity materials
— development of an overall marketing strategy or plan

85. It is widely accepted that marketing research services in the UK are cheaper and more competitively priced than in almost any other European country;

moreover marketing research can be considerably more cost-effective than other marketing services. Further savings could be made in a number of ways:

— by using freelance researchers (freelancers can be cheaper and can often afford to become more involved in a project)
— by using researchers on a consultative rather than an executive basis
— by joint funding (syndication) with other local providers on certain types of project

86. These are now discussed in greater detail:

(i) *Community database*. Some marketing research agencies can offer the services of information specialists. They can provide or help to provide a comprehensive database.

(ii) *Student database*. Systematic surveying of past and present students is of vital importance. Due to the relatively small number of students who would be polled about a particular course, surveys are likely to be of a size manageable by the institution. Research consultants could play an important part by providing a questionnaire design consultancy and advising on computer analysis.

(iii) *Identifying the needs and wants of target groups*. Surveys could be set up, using the institution's database for sampling, to evaluate the present and projected future needs of the target groups. Again, market research consultants could have an important role to play in questionnaire design.

(iv) *Meeting the needs of target groups*. This is an area where providers should not require outside assistance. This objective can be achieved by consulting participating students on a personal level and maintaining a continuous dialogue.

(v) *Public relations*. Providers could consider the value of hiring a freelance public relations consultant. We believe that institutions could have very similar public relations requirements, so neighbouring providers could act co-operatively in this area.

(vi) *Targeting*. See paragraph 82 (vii)

(vii) *Corporate identity*. Market research consultants could be involved in testing the effectiveness (communication, comprehension, impact) of publicity materials. Help could also be given in improving audio-visual or slide presentations.

(viii) *Role of provider; role of AE.* Market research consultants could conduct or give guidance on surveys of the image of and attitudes towards a provider in the local community.

(ix) *Staff development.* Providers could consider the value of using freelance marketing and training consultants, who could offer the benefits of their experience in marketing, communication and personal skills.

87. A Marketing Research Consultancy could become involved, directly or indirectly, in some of these areas.

88. Direct involvement could entail:

— marketing plan preparation
— questionnaire design consultancy
— assessment of publicity materials
— image and attitude surveys

89. Indirect involvement could include acting in an advisory or supervisory role in the selection of public relations, marketing or training consultants.

90. A Marketing Research Consultancy would be able to help an institution establish its database, and could provide regular information bulletins covering specific subjects extracted from a wide range of publications.

# 4. PUBLIC ATTITUDES

91. The context of the interview was given to respondents as follows:

'I want to talk to you about the chances you have to learn about things that interest you or that help you in your work, in your spare time. This would include leisure time classes such as adult education, as well as exam classes which you might do either for qualifications or in connection with your work, training provided by your employer, learning you can do in a group (for instance computer user groups or local history groups), or learning you can do on your own from library books, teach yourself materials or television and radio programmes.'

## Current involvement in Adult/Continuing Education

92. Respondents were asked if they were currently involved in any of these (see above) types of courses or classes or groups.

93. In total, 14 per cent of respondents claimed to be currently involved, this varying slightly by location:

- — Somerset (16%)
- — Rochdale (14%)
- — Tower Hamlets (12%)

94. Highest and lowest levels of current involvement were found in the following subgroups:

| *High involvement* | | *Low involvement* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Females | (16%) | Males | (12%) |
| Age 16–24 | (22%) | Age 45–64 | (10%) |
| Age 25–44 | (17%) | Age 65+ | ( 5%) |
| Social grades AB | (24%) | Social Grades DE | (11%) |
| Owned accommodation | (19%) | Rented accommodation | (10%) |
| Car in household | (21%) | No car in household | ( 5%) |
| Employed part time | (23%) | Housewife (working status) | ( 7%) |
| Unemployed | (20%) | | |
| Employed full time | (16%) | | |

95. The 14 per cent of respondents currently involved in Adult/Continuing Education were taking a wide variety of courses or classes, the main ones being:

| | |
|---|---|
| — sports/gymnastics/keep fit/yoga | (19%) |
| — English language/literature | (14%) |
| — computer studies | (10%) |
| — foreign languages | ( 7%) |
| — painting/sculpture/pottery | ( 5%) |

(Base: 41 respondents)

96. In Rochdale, the main courses being followed were sports and English, whilst in Tower Hamlets computer studies and English were the most popular, and in Somerset sports and foreign languages.

97. The main differences between men and women were for computer studies (males) and sports/keep fit/yoga activities (females).

98. The main institutions attended by those currently involved in Adult/Continuing Education were:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Rochdale* | – Rochdale College | (35%) |
| *Somerset* | – Holyrood School | 44%) |
| | – Taunton Technical College | (13%) |
| *Tower Hamlets* | – No single institution was mentioned by a significant number of respondents | |

99. The main reasons given by respondents for wanting to take the particular course they were on were:

| | |
|---|---|
| — interest and enjoyment | (33%) |
| — for personal gain (e.g. useful hobby/save money etc.) | (21%) |
| — improve job prospects | (21%) |
| — knowledge required for job | (19%) |
| — to keep fit/lose weight | (17%) |
| — something to do/with spare time | ( 7%) |

100. To summarise, most current involvement is skewed towards the young, the higher social grades, owner occupiers, and those with access to a car.

The lowest social grades, and housewives, are underrepresented.

Courses tend to be taken for three main reasons:

— personal fulfilment
— vocational/job reasons
— health reasons

101. Of the 14 per cent of respondents currently involved in Adult/Continuing Education, just over one third (38 per cent) said this was the first course they had attended since leaving full-time education. One third (33 per

cent) said they had taken 'one or two' courses before, 10 per cent had been taking courses 'about once a year or so' and 17 per cent had been taking courses 'much of the time in recent years'. Therefore, over 60 per cent had been on a course at least once previous to the course currently being taken.

102. First time attendance was highest in Somerset, lowest in Rochdale:

— Somerset (56%)
— Tower Hamlets (33%)
— Rochdale (21%)
— (Average level) (38%)

First time attendance was also highest among those aged 16–24 (73 per cent).

103. Those currently involved in Adult/Continuing Education who had been on a course before were asked about the subject of the *last* course immediately prior to the current one:

— sports/gymnastics/keep fit/yoga (16%)
— English language/literature (12%)
— computer studies ( 8%)
— painting/sculpture/pottery ( 8%)
— cookery/catering ( 8%)
— shorthand/typing/office training ( 8%)
— business/management/administration ( 8%)

(Base: 25 respondents)

104. 24 per cent of these respondents had taken this last course within the past year whilst just over half (52 per cent) had taken their last course within the past five years.

105. The main reasons given for taking this last course were:

— interest and enjoyment (28%)
— improve job prospects (20%)
— knowledge required for job (20%)
— for personal gain (e.g. useful hobby/save money etc.) (12%)
— to keep fit/lose weight (12%)

## Previous involvement in Adult/Continuing Education

106. Those respondents who were not currently involved in taking Adult/Continuing Education courses or classes (86 per cent of the sample) were asked whether they had ever been on such a course in the past:

— 38 per cent had been on such a course in the past
— 63 per cent had not

107. This level varied considerably by location, with Tower Hamlets residents being the least likely to have attended courses in the past:

— Rochdale (44%)
— Somerset (42%)
— Tower Hamlets (28%)

108. Highest and lowest levels of previous involvement were found in the following subgroups:

| *High involvement* | | *Low involvement* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Widowed/divorced/separated | (44%) | Single Persons | (28%) |
| Social grades AB | (76%) | Social grade C2 | (35%) |
| Social grade C1 | (51%) | Social grades DE | (26%) |
| Owned accommodation | (52%) | Rented accommodation | (27%) |
| Car in household | (47%) | No car in household | (27%) |

109. These respondents (not currently involved but who had been involved in the past) were asked how frequently in the past they had taken courses:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'I've only taken one or two courses before' | (72%) |
| 'I take a course about once a year or so' | (11%) |
| 'In recent years, I've been taking courses much of the time' | ( 7%) |
| Don't know | ( 9%) |

110. The main institutions attended *last time* by these respondents were:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Rochdale* | — Rochdale College | (30%) |
| | — Rochdale Technical College | ( 3%) |
| *Somerset* | — Holyrood School | (14%) |
| | — Taunton Tech | (14%) |
| | — Ilminster FE College | ( 6%) |
| *Tower Hamlets* | — Smithy Street School (HQ building of Tower Hamlets AE Institution) | (13%) |
| | — Hackney College | ( 8%) |
| | — City & East London College | ( 4%) |

(No other institution was mentioned by more than one respondent)

111. The main courses taken *last time* by these respondents were:

— sports/gymnastics/keep fit/yoga (11%)
— 'other' professional qualifications ( 8%)
— shorthand/typing/office training ( 7%)

— dressmaking/tailoring/sewing ( 7%)
— engineering/electrical/electronics courses ( 5%)
— business/management/administration ( 5%)
— cookery/catering ( 5%)

112. 16 per cent of those not currently participating but who had been involved in Adult/Continuing Education in the past had taken their last course within the past year. 43 per cent had taken their last course within the past five years, and 28 per cent had taken their last course more than 10 years ago:

— one year (16%)
— two years (15%)
— three to five years (12%)
— six to ten years (17%)
— eleven to fifteen years ( 6%)
— sixteen to thirty years (13%)
— over thirty years ( 9%)
— (don't know/can't remember) (11%)

113. The main reasons given for taking this last course were:

— interest and enjoyment (32%)
— knowledge required for job (21%)
— improve job prospects (20%)
— for personal gain (e.g. useful hobby/save money) (16%)
— something to do/with spare time (15%)
— to keep fit/lose weight ( 5%)

## Local Adult/Continuing Education providers

114. Respondents were shown a list of local providers of adult education courses of various types, and were asked:

— which ones they had ever attended for adult education courses
— which ones they had seen advertising or promoting their AE courses
— which one would be closest or most convenient to get to

(The list of schools/colleges shown was different in each location)

**Rochdale**

| INSTITUTION | EVER ATTENDED | SEEN ADVERTISING | CONVENIENCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % |
| AE College (St Mary's Gate) | 19 | 44 | 45 |
| Rochdale College of Technology | 12 | 33 | 22 |
| Rochdale College of Art | 1 | 30 | — |
| Rochdale MSC Skills Centre | — | 30 | 7 |
| Rochdale Training Association | — | 14 | — |
| State Mill Centre | — | 28 | 13 |
| None of these | 69 | 28 | 3 |
| Don't know | — | 2 | 6 |

(Base: 99 respondents)

115. None of the respondents interviewed in Rochdale had ever attended courses or classes at the State Mill Centre (this is probably because the Centre is relatively new) but 28 per cent had seen advertising or promotional material for their courses, and 13 per cent thought the Centre would be the most convenient or closest to get to.

116. Those who had seen advertising/publicity for the State Mill Centre were mainly:

— males (33%)
— married (33%)
— aged 25–34 (24%)
— or aged 65 plus (33%)

Only 17 per cent of those in social grades D and E had seen advertising, only 8 per cent of the unemployed, and only 7 per cent of those aged 16–24.

**Somerset**

| INSTITUTION | EVER ATTENDED | SEEN ADVERTISING | CONVENIENCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % |
| Huish Episcopi School, Langport | — | 2 | — |
| Holyrood School, Chard | 20 | 76 | 98 |
| Ilminster AE Centre | 6 | 20 | 2 |
| Pippins AE Centre, Axminster | — | 1 | — |
| Wadham School, Crewkerne | 2 | 13 | — |
| Yeovil College of FE | — | 13 | — |
| None of these | 76 | 20 | — |
| Don't know | — | 2 | — |

(Base: 100 respondents)

117. 20 per cent of respondents had been on courses at Holyrood School, 76 per cent had seen advertising and 98 per cent thought this establishment would be the closest or most convenient to get to.

118. It is not surprising 98 per cent thought Holyrood School the most convenient to get to since interviewing was centred around Chard, and all the other establishments listed were in other towns, but 76 per cent had seen advertising and this suggests a systematic approach to targeting the local community has been adopted, the success of which can be measured in part by the fact that 20 per cent had attended courses there.

119. Attendance at courses at Holyrood School however is skewed in favour of the professional and middle classes, who nonetheless represent the smaller section of the local population:

| *Social Grade* | *Population* | *Ever Attended* |
|---|---|---|
| | % | % |
| AB | 12 | 33 |
| C1 | 18 | 33 |
| C2 | 36 | 17 |
| DE | 34 | 12 |

120. The only section of the local community not being effectively reached by the school's advertising is those living in rented accommodation (55 per cent aware of advertising, vis-à-vis average level of 76 per cent).

**Tower Hamlets**

| INSTITUTION | EVER ATTENDED | SEEN ADVERTISING | CONVENIENCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % |
| Chisenhale Dance Space | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| City & East London College | 6 | 16 | 9 |
| Hackney College of FE | 6 | 23 | 18 |
| Montefiore Community Education Centre | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| Tower Hamlets AE Institute | 8 | 29 | 37 |
| None of these | 80 | 45 | — |
| Don't know | 3 | 9 | 27 |

(Base: 100 respondents)

121. Four-fifths of local residents had not attended courses at any of the listed establishments but 8 per cent had attended at Tower Hamlets AEI. These were mainly young single people in the C2 social grade; they were considerably more likely to be in employment than unemployed.

122. Advertising by Tower Hamlets AEI had been seen by 29 per cent, more than any of the other establishments listed. Advertising was particularly likely to have been seen by those aged 25–44 (52 per cent), and least likely to have been seen by the D and E social groups (22 per cent), who constitute over 60 per cent of the local population.

123. For those with no car in the household, Tower Hamlets AEI was the most convenient establishment to get to, but for those with a car, Hackney College was almost equally convenient.

## General interest in courses

124. Respondents were shown a list of courses and classes drawn up by the researchers which had been compiled to be representative of courses and classes typically offered by providers of Adult/Continuing Education, and were asked:

- what were their initial thoughts about the classes
- which, if any, they would like to be able to go to
- what other subjects or areas of interest not covered in the list they would like to see being offered locally

*Courses/classes found interesting/appealing*

| COURSES | % |
|---|---|
| Sports/gymnastics/yoga/keep fit | 26 |
| Cookery/catering | 25 |
| Foreign languages | 18 |
| Car maintenance | 18 |
| Carpentry/DIY | 17 |
| Dressmaking/tailoring/sewing | 17 |
| Computer studies | 16 |
| Handicrafts | 15 |
| Painting/sculpture/pottery | 15 |
| English language/literature | 10 |
| Building trades | 9 |
| Nursing/midwifery | 7 |
| Engineering/electrical/electronics skills | 6 |
| Shorthand/typing/office training | 6 |
| Arts subjects | 6 |
| Social work/social services | 5 |
| Science subjects | 3 |
| Social sciences | 2 |
| Business/management/administration | * |
| None of these | 28 |

(Base: All respondents)
* Less than 1 per cent

125. Subgroups expressing greatest interest in the more popular courses were:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Sports/gymnastics/keep fit/yoga* | — Somerset | (36%) |
| | — Age 16–24 | (46%) |
| | — Part-time Workers | (50%) |
| *Cookery/catering* | — Females | (40%) |
| | — age 45–64 | (34%) |
| | — Housewives | (42%) |
| *Foreign languages* | — AB social groups | (39%) |
| | — C1 social group | (32%) |
| *Car maintenance* | — Males | (31%) |
| *Carpentry/DIY* | — Males | (27%) |

126. Subjects such as car maintenance, carpentry/DIY, cookery and catering, and dressmaking appear to be of high interest yet few respondents reported having taken classes in these areas (see Sections 1 and 2), conversely, subjects such as business courses appear to be of low interest to the majority and yet account for a considerable proportion of the courses which have actually been taken.

127. Those not interested in taking any of the listed courses were mainly retired persons over the age of 65.

128. 81 per cent of respondents in Somerset expressed an interest in at least one of the course areas, compared to 70 per cent in Rochdale and 65 per cent in Tower Hamlets.

*Initial thoughts on range of courses offered*

129. Reactions fell into three broad categories:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *High interest* | — good selection/comprehensive list to choose from | (37%) |
| | — would like to know more about a particular one (various) | (22%) |
| | — good cross-section/something for everyone | (13%) |
| | — would help to learn a trade/further career/get a better job | ( 6%) |
| *Low involvement* | — interested, but wouldn't do/too busy | ( 9%) |
| | — alright for those who want it | ( 8%) |
| | — limited selection/doesn't cater for all age groups etc. | ( 3%) |
| | — typical list/average | ( 1%) |
| | — good for young people (i.e. not for me) | ( 1%) |
| *Low interest* | — not interested/wouldn't be tempted | ( 9%) |

*Other areas would like to see offered*

130. The main suggestions were for:

| | |
|---|---|
| — photography | (4%) |
| — music | (2%) |
| — gardening | (2%) |
| — hairdressing | (2%) |
| — maths | (2%) |
| — accountancy/bookkeeping | (2%) |
| — flower arranging | (1%) |

## Likelihood of enrolling

131. All respondents were asked how likely they would be to enrol in a class or course in the foreseeable future:

| | |
|---|---|
| — very likely | 16% |
| — quite likely | 20% |
| — not very likely | 28% |
| — not at all likely | 36% |

132. Those most likely to enrol were those working part time (31 per cent very likely) or unemployed (24 per cent), and those aged 25–44 (22 per cent); whilst those least likely to enrol were those aged 65 plus (73 per cent not at all likely), housewives (44 per cent) and retired persons generally (54 per cent).

133. All respondents were next asked the reasons for their likelihood of enrolling.

*Very/Quite likely to enrol* (Base: 108 respondents)

| | |
|---|---|
| — would be interesting/enjoyable/want to do it | (28%) |
| — further your education/like learning something new | (21%) |
| — something to do in the spare time/have more time now | (20%) |
| — can't at moment/will do when circumstances change | (11%) |
| — further my career/better job prospects | ( 9%) |
| — meet people/mix | ( 7%) |
| — am in the habit of going already | ( 4%) |

*Not very/Not at all likely to enrol* (Base: 190 respondents)

| | |
|---|---|
| — haven't time/too busy | (50%) |
| — not interested/nothing of interest | (23%) |
| — poor health/too old | (16%) |
| — children too young | (10%) |
| — unsafe/won't go out at night | ( 4%) |
| — family member ill/can't leave home | ( 4%) |

## Courses likely to consider

134. Those respondents (36 per cent of the sample) who were 'Very' or 'Quite likely' to consider enrolling in the foreseeable future were asked:

— what type of course they would consider
— their reasons for being likely to take the course
— the institution they would be most likely to go to

135. The main courses these respondents would be likely to consider taking were:

| | |
|---|---|
| — sports/gymnastics/keep fit/yoga | (13%) |
| — foreign languages | (11%) |
| — computer studies | (11%) |
| — cookery/catering | (11%) |
| — car maintenance | ( 7%) |
| — carpentry/DIY | ( 5%) |
| — shorthand/typing/office training | ( 5%) |
| — dressmaking/tailoring/sewing | ( 5%) |
| — painting/sculpture/pottery | ( 5%) |

136. The main reasons were given as:

| | |
|---|---|
| — just to learn | (35%) |
| — interest/enjoyment/always wanted to | (31%) |
| — better job prospects/better at work | (19%) |
| — to keep fit/lose weight | ( 9%) |
| — something to do/with spare time | ( 6%) |
| — meet people/make friends | ( 6%) |

137. The establishments these respondents were most likely to go to were:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Rochdale* | — Rochdale College (unspecified) |
| | — Rochdale College of AE |
| | — Rochdale (unspecified) |
| | — Rochdale College of Art |
| | — Rochdale Technical College |
| *Somerset* | — Holyrood School |
| | — Ilminster |
| *Tower Hamlets* | — Hackney College |
| | — City & East London College |
| | — Tower Hamlets AEI |

## Improvements in provision

138. Those respondents who were 'Not very' or 'Not at all likely' to consider enrolling in the foreseeable future were asked whether they would *ever* consider enrolling:

— 52 per cent would
— 48 per cent would not

Those who would never consider enrolling were mainly:

| | |
|---|---|
| — Tower Hamlets | (59%) |
| — Aged 65 plus | (89%) |
| — Social grades D and E | (57%) |
| — No car in household | (62%) |

139. All respondents who were 'Not very' or 'Not at all likely' to enrol in the foreseeable future were then asked what colleges could do to encourage people like themselves to take part in classes or courses.

140. The main suggestions were:

| | |
|---|---|
| — advertise in press/Jobcentres/TV | (11%) |
| — have courses at convenient times of day, days of week | (11%) |
| — arrange bus passes/free transport | ( 6%) |
| — lower prices/free courses | ( 5%) |
| — provide creche facilities | ( 4%) |
| — more information on courses | ( 3%) |
| — offer courses at home | ( 2%) |

A further 40 per cent stated they were still not interested, in spite of any improvements which might be made, and 16 per cent had no suggestions to make.

## Attitudes towards Adult/Continuing Education

141. Respondents were read a series of statements about participating in adult or continuing education, and were asked how much they personally agreed with each one, using a rating scale:

— I agree strongly
— I agree slightly
— I disagree slightly
— I disagree strongly

*High interest attitudes*

142. Those respondents who expressed an interest (very/quite likely) in enrolling on a course in the foreseeable future were asked to comment on a

particular series of statements, the results of which are shown below:

| | *AGREE STRONGLY/ SLIGHTLY* % | *DISAGREE STRONGLY/ SLIGHTLY* % | *DON'T KNOW* % |
|---|---|---|---|
| There's something for everyone | 93 | 7 | — |
| It's the only place you can learn something new | 58 | 42 | — |
| I've nothing else to do in the evenings | 31 | 69 | — |
| I like learning about new hobbies and interests | 95 | 4 | 1 |
| It helps me with my job | 60 | 33 | 6 |
| It's a good way to meet people | 99 | 1 | — |
| They are very good value for money | 73 | 8 | 19 |
| They are for people like me | 86 | 11 | 3 |

143. These respondents agree very strongly that AE has something for everyone and is a good way to meet people, and that AE is for people like them, and they like learning.

144. However, they also believe that it's not the only place to learn something new, and the majority do have other things to do in the evenings. 33 per cent say such courses do not help them in their job.

*Low interest attitudes*

145. Those respondents who did not express an interest in enrolling on a course in the foreseeable future were given a different series of statements:

| | *AGREE STRONGY/ SLIGHTLY* % | *DISAGREE STRONGLY/ SLIGHTLY* % | *DON'T KNOW* % |
|---|---|---|---|
| I haven't time to go on these courses | 67 | 31 | 3 |
| I'm not interested in any of the courses they offer | 35 | 62 | 3 |
| The college is too difficult to get to | 18 | 72 | 9 |
| The classes are simply too expensive | 20 | 34 | 46 |

| | *AGREE STRONGY/ SLIGHTLY* % | *DISAGREE STRONGLY/ SLIGHTLY* % | *DON'T KNOW* % |
|---|---|---|---|
| I wouldn't like the people that go on these | 5 | 73 | 23 |
| I don't need any qualifications | 51 | 44 | 6 |
| I don't know enough about them to decide | 54 | 39 | 6 |
| They're not for people like me | 27 | 68 | 4 |

146. The three principal reasons for not being likely to enrol in an adult or continuing education course are:

— lack of time
— lack of information on which to base an opinion
— no need of qualifications

147. A majority of these respondents do not take the view that the college is inaccessible, or that the courses lack relevance to them; and most deny that they wouldn't like the people or that they're not for 'people like me'.

148. It would seem overall that the action which providers themselves would be able to take to maximise uptake amongst this group would be to provide clear information about their course offerings and fee structure.

*General attitudes*

149. A third series of attitude statements was put to all respondents:

| | *AGREE STRONGY/ SLIGHTLY* % | *DISAGREE STRONGLY/ SLIGHTLY* % | *DON'T KNOW* % |
|---|---|---|---|
| They should offer more courses for people like me | 44 | 48 | 8 |
| The courses are too long, they should be shorter | 10 | 49 | 41 |
| I need more information about the classes, what they cover and so on | 61 | 35 | 4 |
| They are simply too expensive, I would go if they were cheaper | 25 | 45 | 30 |

| | *AGREE STRONGY/ SLIGHTLY* % | *DISAGREE STRONGLY/ SLIGHTLY* % | *DON'T KNOW* % |
|---|---|---|---|
| If some of my friends went, so would I | 37 | 60 | 3 |
| I would never even consider going to classes | 19 | 79 | 2 |
| If the weekly classes were at a convenient time I'd go | 50 | 44 | 6 |
| I don't think I'll ever get around to joining a class | 38 | 59 | 4 |
| If there was an introductory class about it I would go | 58 | 36 | 6 |

150. Strongest agreement was expressed for the statements:

— I need more information about the classes
— If there was an introductory class I would go

151. Opinions were roughly equally divided as to whether the courses were of personal relevance or if the scheduling of courses was inconvenient.

152. Only 10 per cent thought the courses too long and only 19 per cent would never consider enrolling. 38 per cent did however think they would never get around to joining a class. Only 25 per cent thought the cost of courses prohibitive.

153. Many respondents lacked information on which to base an opinion with regard to length of courses or the fee structure.

## Awareness of advertising

154. Respondents were asked whether they had seen any advertising or anything informing them about classes or courses at their local college, and if so:

— where this was seen
— what it was communicating about the courses or the college itself
— what it didn't say which would have been of interest

155. A total of 62 per cent had seen such advertising, this varying considerably by location:

— Somerset (73%)
— Rochdale (68%)
— Tower Hamlets (45%)

156. Those most likely to have seen advertising were:

| | |
|---|---|
| — aged 25–44 | (72%) |
| — social groups AB | (88%) |
| — car in household | (76%) |
| — employed part time | (81%) |

157. The main places where advertising had been seen were:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Rochdale* | — newspaper advertisements | (84%) |
| | — public libraries | (19%) |
| | — at the college | (12%) |
| | — leaflet through door | (10%) |
| *Somerset* | — Cresta magazine | (53%) |
| | — newspaper advertisements | (45%) |
| | — leaflets through door | (37%) |
| | — public libraries | (16%) |
| | — local schools | (15%) |
| *Tower Hamlets* | — newspaper advertisements | (42%) |
| | — public libraries | (11%) |
| | — leaflets through door | (11%) |

158. Other places where advertising had been seen include:

— local schools
— through friends
— through workmates/trades union officials
— Jobcentres
— FE colleges

159. The main elements of the advertising communicated to and recalled by the respondents were:

| | |
|---|---|
| — courses/range of courses offered | (56%) |
| — times and dates | (36%) |
| — fees and prices | (22%) |
| — enrolment information | (12%) |
| — everything | (12%) |
| — places where classes held | ( 9%) |
| — how to get further information | ( 5%) |
| — names/details of teachers | ( 4%) |

160. Further information which was lacking but would have been of interest included:

| | |
|---|---|
| — prices | (12%) |
| — course details | ( 8%) |
| — times and dates | ( 3%) |

(76 per cent were unable to suggest any further information they would have welcomed.)

## Further information

161. All respondents were asked what sorts of information they would want to know about their local college and its courses in order for them to consider going. The suggestions, in full, were:

| | *TOTAL* | *ROCHDALE* | *SOMERSET* | *TOWER HAMLETS* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | % | % |
| Course fees/cost | 41 | 42 | 43 | 37 |
| Times and dates | 38 | 33 | 44 | 35 |
| Coverage/extent of course | 17 | 29 | 11 | 11 |
| Course syllabus | 16 | 13 | 19 | 16 |
| Length of courses (weeks/ terms) | 14 | 14 | 13 | 14 |
| Location of college/ availability of public transport | 9 | 8 | 6 | 14 |
| Tutor's sex/name/qualifications | 5 | 6 | 6 | 3 |
| How basic/advanced the course is | 4 | 11 | 1 | 1 |
| Availability of canteen/ social facilities | 3 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| Materials/equipment provided/ not provided | 3 | — | 5 | 4 |
| Type of qualification/exam/ end result | 3 | 8 | — | — |
| Creche facilities | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Age group of other course members | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Other answers | 6 | 5 | 5 | 7 |
| Information quite adequate already | 8 | 3 | 17 | 4 |
| Not interested anyway | 15 | 13 | 14 | 19 |
| Don't know | 8 | 9 | 3 | 13 |

## Usefulness of promotions

162. Finally, respondents were read out a number of ways in which a local college could communicate about itself and its courses. Respondents rated each one on a rating scale of usefulness:

— very useful
— quite useful
— not very useful
— not at all useful

| | *VERY/QUITE USEFUL* | *NOT VERY/NOT AT ALL USEFUL* | *MEAN SCORE* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | % | % | (100–0) |
| Local newspaper advertising | 91 | 8 | 82 |
| Leaflets/posters in local libraries, shops etc. | 83 | 17 | 73 |
| Direct mail/through letterbox | 77 | 22 | 74 |
| Leaflets/posters in college itself | 40 | 58 | 43 |
| Local radio advertising | 54 | 45 | 52 |
| From friends and relatives | 60 | 35 | 56 |
| Education advice shop in local high street or shopping centre | 73 | 24 | 68 |
| College stand or display at public events, exhibitions or in shopping centres | 86 | 13 | 74 |

163. Overall, the most useful method of communication is through newspaper advertising. Leaflets in local libraries, direct through letterboxes and college stands are also rated highly in terms of usefulness.

Leaflets and posters inside the college itself are rated 'not useful' by 58 per cent of respondents.

# 5. THE INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

164. Respondents were told: 'This survey is being conducted on behalf of the FEU as part of a programme of research designed to evaluate how Adult and Continuing Education may improve the marketing of its services, and to determine how Adult Education providers may benefit from using market research in the future'.

## Current understanding of marketing

165. Respondents were asked what they understood by the term 'marketing', in the context of adult and continuing education.

166. All respondents in all six establishments had some working definition of marketing. As is reported in *Marketing FE* (FEU 1985) these definitions varied greatly in terms of accuracy, completeness and understanding. Most definitions encompassed the idea of conveying a message or communicating information about their 'product' to the public:

— 'to get across to the various groupings the role and content of adult education'
— 'getting the message of what we can provide across to potential clients'
— 'making our product known to the public'

In some instances, marketing was equated with simple selling:

— 'selling what we can offer'
— 'an attempt to sell a product'

167. Only a few respondents suggested that marketing in the context of AE involved, or should involve, identifying and meeting the needs of community, employers or others. This particular aspect of marketing tended to be recognised more directly in establishments having formal links with other, larger educational establishments (e.g. East Warwickshire; Hull).

168. Adult and Continuing Education appears to be less familiar with marketing than Further Education in so far as the main impression of marketing as an activity involves:

— communicating a message

with relatively less awareness of the importance of:

— identification/anticipation of needs and wants
— meeting needs

169. AE also appears less aware that there are 'multiple publics' which need to be targeted, and are less likely to volunteer that marketing is or should be an active process, requiring active involvement in the community.

170. As is also reported in *Marketing FE*, no unease was expressed by respondents about the role of or necessity for marketing.

## Current marketing activities

171. Respondents were asked about the main marketing activities undertaken by the establishment, the main marketing activities undertaken in support of the respondent's department's work, and the respondent's own personal involvement in or responsibility for marketing courses.

172. Respondents reported a wide range of marketing activities which were common to all the 'establishments' and which tended to be carried out on the 'establishment' level as opposed to the departmental level. The principal activities included:

— the prospectus or main brochure
— leaflets and posters
— local press advertising and 'editorial' articles
— local radio broadcasts
— open days or other events for the public
— development and maintenance of personal contacts

173. The prospectus tends to be the most important marketing tool for all the establishments, and is complemented or supported by a range of other printed materials. To an extent, the prospectus is the shop window for an adult education establishment and, whilst many were proud or at least satisfied with the presentation, style and content of their prospectus, others strongly suggested there was room for improvement.

174. Brochures, leaflets (about the institution and about specific courses) and posters were said to be distributed widely to a variety of targets or publics:

— Jobcentres
— community centres
— schools
— libraries
— through the door
— in the high street/shopping centre
— local employers

175. Local press (usually freesheets) are used where possible and where practical, although cost was frequently a limiting factor. Similarly local radio

had been used by some establishments as a means of raising awareness and stimulating interest; some establishments had made more frequent and better use of such media than others.

176. Open days and other events organised by the establishments were typically held on a regular basis. Some institutions arrange open days on site, whilst others prefer to get involved in events organised by the local council or a community group. Such events are said to provide these establishments with a useful promotional platform, and have the added advantage of stressing their commitment to the local community.

177. Developing and maintaining a range of personal contacts with local community leaders and employers was said by nearly all respondents to be a major priority. A major constraint on all of these activities and on personal contacts in particular is lack of resources in terms of time, remission and funding.

178. One of the six institutions had set up a Marketing Group whose aim was to take on the marketing role for the establishment as a whole and to co-ordinate the activities of the different departments. Although this was a relatively recent phenomenon, enthusiasm and confidence was expressed in its potential.

179. Other specific marketing ventures mentioned included:

— advertising on buses
— public service radio broadcasts
— a college display stand in a job centre
— a promotional video

180. Generally, marketing is organised at the establishment level with departments typically producing only their own course leaflets and information.

181. It was widely acknowledged by respondents that there was little or no attempt to evaluate marketing or promotional activities in a formal or structured way, and this was regarded as a drawback. In some instances it was felt that simple common sense or good judgement would suffice to indicate whether or not to repeat, for example, an open day, or how best to modify it.

182. Responsibility for marketing within any particular establishment depends on the structure of that establishment and on the degree of formality of that structure. Some of the establishments have a relatively strong departmental structure, enabling their Heads of Department not just to produce course leaflets and information but also to become involved in marketing the establishment in a wider sense. Other establishments tend not to have a rigidly defined departmental structure, with more senior staff being Course Heads rather than Heads of Department. In these establishments, responsibility for

and control of marketing appears to be exercised more directly from the centre.

183. In this way, the concept of a 'department' is not necessarily always a useful one in the context of Adult or Continuing Education, this being a major difference between Adult Education and Further Education.

184. Of the six participating institutions:

— Three had a departmental structure, and Heads of Department were responsible for marketing their department (and by implication the establishment as a whole) as well as marketing specific courses. In some instances, departmental staff were expected or encouraged to participate actively in this process, in other cases not.
— In two cases, there was no strong departmental structure, and senior teaching and administrative staff had responsibility for marketing.
— In one instance, the departmental structure was overlaid by a marketing team or group, having responsibility for marketing on a college-wide basis, and complementing the activities of the individual departments (from which its members were also drawn).

## Marketing inputs for courses

185. Respondents were asked about the process of setting up and running courses. Specifically they were asked about the steps taken to ensure that courses will meet the needs of:

— the local community (i.e. potential adult learners)
— local employers and industry
— local community groups
— trades unions
— the unemployed
— ethnic minorities

these representing a range of possible target audiences each of which may or may not be of interest to a particular department or institution.

186. As suggested above, there is considerable variation between the institutions as to the relevance of each of these possible target groups. The relative importance attached to each one is obviously a reflection of the nature of the community served by a provider, but it also reflects the stated aims, if any, of the provider.

187. In Rugby, the East Warwickshire College of Further Education for example is said by staff to attempt to meet the needs of the unemployed, employers and the local community in general, but without specific reference

to ethnic minority groups. There is a tendency to bypass local community organisations in favour of talking directly to the community.

188. In Tower Hamlets, the Adult Education Institute expends major efforts in attempting to ascertain and meet the needs of ethnic minorities, especially via contacts with local community organisations; whilst employers tend not to be regarded as a primary target.

189. In Brighton, The Friends Centre regards the local community as a whole as its market, whether it be the unemployed, ethnic groups or the more affluent middle classes. Employers are largely ignored and the emphasis is on non-vocational rather than vocational training.

190. In Rochdale, the State Mill Centre has a specific concern for pre-vocational training and thus the young unemployed and potential employers receive greatest consideration.

191. In Hull, the University's Department of Adult Education concerns itself almost entirely with non-vocational education for the local general public, leaving other adult education providers free to ascertain needs for special provision for specific groups within society.

192. In Chard, the Holyrood School's Community Education Department regards the local community as being of primary importance and therefore seeks to provide mainly non-vocational (and pre-vocational) training, leaving other providers to cater for vocational needs.

193. Most respondents suggested that steps were taken to ensure courses would meet the needs of the various targets at which they were aimed. This was almost always done on a subjective, unstructured or unsystematic basis:

— informal discussions
— dialogue with third parties
— taking previous experience into account

194. Acknowledging the unstructured nature of this process, respondents were inclined to refer to it as 'enlightened guesswork':

> 'We provide courses that we perceive will fill a slot'
>
> 'We have an idea for a course which we then structure and get approved'
>
> 'We examine our resources and make assumptions we think are reasonable'
>
> 'We have a hunch based partly on historical facts, then we run a taster course to see if it will be attended'

195. Once the need for a course has been identified, considerations such as funding, staffing, LEA regulations and certification requirements may need to be taken into account, which may have the effect of considerably altering the original course idea or plan:

> 'The system restricts us in what we can offer to our customers but we do try to change the structure and timing of a course to meet people's needs'

196. In some cases respondents were able to set up or modify courses as a result of taking students' comments into consideration, but this was mainly on non-certificated courses, or on courses offered by the smaller establishments:

> 'The courses we have, have arisen from needs voiced by students'

> 'If enough people ask for a course and we can obtain funding, we can put it on'

> 'My course is changed each year according to what people have said this year about the course'

197. The majority of respondents were able to give details of one or more instances of discussion and co-operation with local employers or community groups or other bodies which had been rewarding in the sense of resulting in new or modified courses.

198. These examples covered a wide range of courses, but it was noticeable that in most cases the first approach had been made not by the institution but by those outside the college seeking assistance:

> 'The Co-op asked us to help build up the confidence of their women employees to take on more senior positions, this led to a course'

199. Respondents pointed to a number of other sources of information (besides those mentioned above) which were useful or potentially useful as inputs for developing and maintaining courses. The main one among these was knowledge of the activities and courses offered by other local AE providers. This helps to highlight gaps in adult and continuing education provision and to avoid unnecessary and unwanted duplication and competition. At the same time, it can also help to identify those courses which should be offered by an institution but are currently only offered by a competitor provider.

200. Knowledge of competitor activity as an input for course development may not be of importance for all AE providers; some establishments are geographically located in such a way that there are no other 'local' competitors to take account of.

201. Other potential sources included Government statistics, LEA statistics, and publications by FEU and others. These were thought to be useful for

background information which might help to inform a decision on course development. Nearly all respondents mentioning this as a possibility thought it would be valuable, but in practice this was seldom done.

202. Other sources included professional or academic journals, BBC educational programmes, the MSC, the WEA and NATFHE.

## Monitoring student attitudes

203. Respondents were asked whether there was any follow-up of adult learners after completing a course as a means of evaluating the course, and whether there was any system for recording information on the attitudes of present students towards their courses.

204. AE providers do attempt to follow-up on adult learners after completing a course, but their ability to do so effectively or systematically is hindered by considerations of time and cost.

205. Consequently, most follow-ups are informal or unstructured, and there is no established policy of systematic follow-up on most courses.

206. Monitoring is required for MSC funded courses and on certain other certificated courses but, more usually, monitoring is at the discretion of the establishment.

207. Feedback is thought by all respondents to be extremely valuable whether it be as a means of leading to change, or simply to support the continued existence of a course.

208. Typically, lecturers seek feedback using one or more of the following approaches:

- visiting ex-students at home
- chance encounters in the street
- sending open letters

209. The open letter technique, or written request for information, does not appear to be used to full advantage, either in terms of the extent to which it is used, or in the way in which the feedback generated is used: there does not appear to be any systematic attempt to analyse or record the results.

> 'Feedback is useful, it can lead to change'

## Methods of communication and promotion

216. Respondents were asked what methods were used to promote the establishment and its services to:

— the local community
— potential students from beyond the local community or from abroad (where appropriate)
— local employers and other bodies
— groups such as the unemployed or ethnic minorities or others who may require special provision

*The local community*

217. All six establishments were active in producing and distributing a range of printed materials. Three of the establishments regarded the local community as a *general* target as being the most important (whilst another three regarded disadvantaged groups, such as the unemployed and ethnic minorities, as their most important target).

218. Common to all establishments were:
— prospectus or brochure
— course leaflets

these being regarded as the principal marketing tools, and being widely distributed through libraries, schools, job centres and other public places.

219. Newspaper advertising and articles, open days and other ad hoc events, local radio advertising and broadcasts, posters, participation in community events, and co-operative ventures with Jobcentres and the MSC were all used by some but not all establishments to varying degrees. These were all regarded as being useful for increasing awareness of the institution and its services.

220. Other activities were mentioned by one establishment only; these include:

— a promotional video available for viewing by the local community
— mailshots of the local community
— participation in Careers Conventions

221. Providers were able to show the researchers a wide range of publicity materials. Generally, the content of brochures and leaflets was of an undisputably high order, but the presentation and physical appearance varied widely. Design and production costs are an obvious limiting factor on the physical appearance of printed materials. Well produced, visually attractive materials have obvious benefits.

222. Respondents acknowledged that, at reasonable cost, printed materials and their distribution could be improved. Interest was expressed in adopting a more professional approach to producing these materials. Respondents also claimed to be interested in stepping up press advertising and articles, and the use of radio.

223. A few respondents also expressed a desire that AE providers should group together in a local network, if that were possible, in order to co-ordinate their marketing efforts and pool resources.

224. At somewhat greater cost, a marketing professional or co-ordinator was suggested by several establishments as being a potentially useful way forward. This, it was felt, would help to overcome their current lack of marketing expertise.

*Potential students from beyond the local community or from overseas*

225. Two of the establishments participating in the study had an interest in marketing to potential students from outside the local area or from abroad, these being East Warwickshire College of FE and Hull University. Both these establishments have sophisticated and well developed communications programmes but both are geared specifically to the establishment as a whole, and not to the Adult Education function within the establishment. The Adult Education functions within these two establishments do not appear to have their own independent initiatives, although they may well benefit from their association with the larger establishments of which they are a part.

*Local employers and other bodies*

226. All the participating establishments regard the development and maintenance of links with industry as being valuable (but in two cases at least, the establishments were not seeking to be actively involved with employers at all. This was a conscious decision and a reflection of their stated aims and objectives).

227. Establishments with an interest in industry relied heavily on their standard brochures and course leaflets in targeting local employers, and also placed great emphasis on one-to-one personal contacts, and contact through employer organisations and associations. Employers were also invited to open days and other ad hoc events.

228. Time and cost permitting, many institutions would like to develop a better programme of employer visits. Promotional materials aimed specifically at employers were also thought to be a necessity in the future.

229. Targeting employers was thought important not just to persuade them to sponsor courses, but also to persuade them of the potential advantages to their business of encouraging employees to continue their education and develop their interests outside the workplace.

*Special interest groups*

230. The two main disadvantaged groups said to require special attention were ethnic minorities and the unemployed.

231. Of these, the ethnic minorities are the more likely to be the target of special initiatives. In three of the establishments, ethnic minorities are regarded as being at least as important as the local community *in general*. In Tower Hamlets, ethnic minorities form the largest target group within the local community.

232. The commonest special initiatives for ethnic minorities include:
- publicity materials in foreign languages
- involvement in multicultural events
- co-operation and contact with community organisations representing ethnic minorities
- more active promotion of ESL, and basic literacy and numeracy courses
- willingness to hold courses in community centres or other places more familiar and less threatening to ethnic groups

233. For the unemployed, establishments located in areas of high unemployment attempt to:
- achieve a greater presence in Jobcentres and other places frequented by the unemployed
- work closer with the MSC and other interested bodies
- organise low-cost or free courses, where subsidisation can be obtained

234. Some establishments are located in areas where unemployment is relatively low and where special provision and attention is less imperative, others in areas with relatively small ethnic communities. There was, however, a suggestion that some establishments were not acknowledging the presence of groups within the community having special needs in that they were not actively seeking to cater for their needs or communicate an interest in their needs.

*Other promotional activities*

235. Most establishments were able to give at least one example not mentioned elsewhere of a promotional or publicity activity which had been undertaken and proved particularly successful or rewarding. These included:
- a week-long 'teach-in', free for all-comers
- a sports open day
- theatrical events
- a public service television broadcast
- a three-day multicultural event

236. Some establishments appear to demonstrate more flair and initiative than others, yet even those who had organised open days acknowledged that these had not always been well attended, due usually to insufficient or inadequate advance publicity.

*Evaluating the effectiveness of publicity and promotional activities*

237. In most cases, evaluation of publicity and promotions is on an informal basis, involving word of mouth, verbal feedback and guesswork. Counting heads at an organised event can be a useful way of evaluating effectiveness, but the most obvious and economical method would be to inquire on enrolment what influences had been brought to bear by the establishment prior to enrolment. Two of the establishments ask this type of question on their enrolment forms. Used to its full advantage, this technique could provide useful feedback and indications of the effectiveness of different types of activity. This in turn could lead to better use of time, resources and budget.

## Distinguishing characteristics of AE providers

238. Since Adult and Continuing Education is provided by a variety of different types of educational establishments, respondents were asked how, in their opinion, their establishment differed from the majority of Adult Education providers.

239. All six establishments believe they have advantages over other adult education providers in terms of:

— being more flexible and responsive to needs
— having a better range of course offerings
— serving the local community more effectively

*East Warwickshire College of FE*

240. The AE school places equal emphasis on vocational and non-vocational provision, but sees itself as being inextricably linked with the FE College of which it is a part. This has major implications for marketing, since the emphasis is on building a corporate image for the establishment as a whole.

*Tower Hamlets Adult Education Institute*

241. The Institute specialises particularly in 'low-level courses' and 'education for survival'. The Institute genuinely believes it is community-led and closer to the community than most other providers would be. Marketing is hampered by administrative and infrastructure problems (too many sites), staff shortages, and language barriers.

*Friends Centre, Brighton*

242. The Centre sees its small size and informality as a major asset. Their Quaker origins are reflected in a caring philosophy, and the Centre does not wish to regard itself in purely business terms. There could be wariness of self-promotion if this were not linked directly into the caring philosophy.

*Rochdale State Mill Centre*

243. The Centre regards itself as being largely employment-orientated, and as being a 'broker' of adult education at the centre of a local AE network. Staff feel that the community has a blurred impression of some of its activities:

> 'We have problems conveying to the public what it is we do.'

The Centre does however seem to have made remarkable advances during its short existence.

*University of Hull Department of Adult and Continuing Education*

244. The Department recognises it has an academic orientation, and offers an above-average range of certificated courses. The marketing power of the University as a whole has beneficial effects on the Department but at the same time makes it difficult for the Department to establish an image or reputation of its own.

*Holyrood School, Chard*

245. The Community Education Department strongly believes its activities serve the community and are directed by the community. The community served is relatively small and cohesive, and the school has created for itself a pivotal role within the community.

## Suggested improvements to marketing

246. Asked about the specific improvements or changes which might improve the marketing of their establishment, respondents gave a remarkably similar range of suggestions:

- — increase funding generally
- — increase funding specifically for marketing
- — give higher priority or status to the marketing function within the establishment

247. Implicit in the latter suggestion was a perception of the valuable contribution which might be made by a marketing team or professional, co-

ordinating marketing activities and enhancing the professional skills of the staff.

248. Other suggestions made concerned staff training in general, improvements to the physical environment, and better facilities.

> 'Adult Education has always been a Cinderella, we need to inform the public what we do'
>
> 'Resources are the key to our efforts, especially in marketing'
>
> 'We are asking people to take on tasks in the area of marketing which they are not specifically trained for, nor have the time to do'

# 6. EMPLOYERS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

249. Respondents were told: 'we are carrying out this survey on behalf of the FEU, we are talking to people like yourself to get your views on the provision of adult education and training locally, and on the efforts made by adult education and training providers to canvass your opinions and inform you about their courses.'

## Employers

250. Staff from a wide range of companies were interviewed ranging from manufacturing and engineering, to retailers, hotel chains and the food industry.

251. As is reported in *Marketing FE* (FEU 1985), the standards of qualifications and experience required from non-management job applicants varied enormously, from GCE to, in some cases, none. In many cases, personality, aptitude and experience were more important than educational qualifications.

252. Attitudes towards education (including Adult and Continuing Education) expressed by those interviewed were generally positive. As is reported in *Marketing FE*, the external education of employees has distinct and measurable benefits, in terms of:

- providing skills and training the employer is unable to offer
- promoting loyalty to the company
- giving employees a wider outlook on the importance and role of their job
- generally increasing the motivation of employees

> 'It's good for people to do courses on things outside work, like flower arranging or something. It's better than just housework and let's face it, if my workers relax properly and are happy then they will work well for me'

> 'I tend to consider that (AE) as something personal, where people feel for their own benefit and gratification they would like to pursue studies they've not had a chance to do before'

253. Employers claim to respond favourably to their staff's involvement in education by offering, where possible, one or more of the following:

- day release
- time off in lieu
- sponsoring or paying fees
- giving general encouragement

254. Active encouragement of staff is most likely in the area of vocational education or training, where an employer is more able to see a quantifiable benefit to the quality of the employees' work.

> 'If they show aptitude and willingness and perhaps want to move into a particular field then we would encourage them by paying for the course, examination fees, books and travelling expenses'

> 'Our policy is to support employees in their education, providing the subject being studied is relevant to both the individual and the company'

> 'It would have to be work-related for us to give time off'

255. Most employers interviewed, when talking about the benefits of education, were thinking in terms of Further or Higher Education and not in terms of Adult or Continuing Education. Further and Higher Education are thought by most of the employers to be the natural or automatic choice for vocational training or retraining, few were thinking of Adult Education in this context.

256. The vast majority of external training opportunities of which employers make use is provided by FE Colleges, Technical Colleges and Polytechnics, and in some cases Universities and Specialist Colleges (i.e. colleges funded by a particular industry).

257. Employers appear to be well catered for by these types of provider.

> 'Adult education in this area doesn't seem to be very prevalent. I have no contact with any adult education body within the town, and certainly no information regarding relevant courses is ever sent to me'

> 'Further and higher education seem to provide the sort of thing we want in general terms. They could keep us supplied with information as to what courses they have in mind to put on, I suppose'

258. Adult and Continuing Education is thought of as being largely concerned with non-vocational interests. Definitions given by respondents tend to emphasise self-improvement and learning for pleasure, although some do recognise the vocational emphasis of some adult education courses and colleges.

> 'I would have thought it was training people for work they're not used to. Retraining as well I suppose'

> 'They meet a need within our society that no other college or institution caters for, but there's nothing there for us'

259. The difference between 'adult education' and 'continuing education' is not well understood. Both terms are thought of synonymously by most respondents.

'"Continuing education" would be providing employees with the opportunity to develop themselves to their highest potential'

'Continuing education? In a nutshell, it's the bit after the formal education. It's the same thing as adult education really'

260. Adult education providers are not the automatic or natural choice of most employers for vocational training, retraining or skills acquisition, since:

— adult education is not thought or known to offer relevant courses
— adult education is thought to cater mainly for non-vocational learning, and for community rather than industry or business needs
— other types of education provider (in particular FE) are said to sometimes adequately meet their current requirements

261. As employers are generally only interested in education providers who have something specific and relevant to offer, it is clear that Adult Education providers are not promoting their capabilities in a way which will have an impact or make an impression on industry.

'They're very good at doing what they want to do but they're not so good at thinking about what else they should be doing. They should come out of their chrysalis more'

'I don't think enough thought goes into who they are actually hoping to bring into the classroom'

262. In some instances (e.g. Holyrood School, Hull University Adult Education Department and Brighton Friends Centre) this is certainly a reflection of the fact that these establishments do not regard the commercial sector as a primary target for courses, and do not target or communicate with them as a result.

263. In other cases (e.g. Tower Hamlets AE Institute and East Warwickshire FE College) industry is regarded by the establishment as an important target, and yet respondents interviewed (all of whom were nominated for interview by the establishment concerned) felt that the establishment concerned was erratic in maintaining contacts, erratic in sending brochures and course materials, and consequently was probably not taking the needs of industry and commerce seriously enough.

'They probably don't know we exist here. They rang our old office about an apprentice who is on one of their courses'

'Certainly they could begin to ask companies what the needs of their businesses are. They should have closer links with industry in general, if that is what they want'

'We should have more regular contact. They should have a standard system of mailing lists. They never seem to send things to the right people. They're not quite sure what it's all about. There has to be consistency'

264. In one case (Rochdale State Mill Centre), the employers nominated were more fully aware of the centre's capabilities and did feel that the centre was making a concerted effort to communicate with them, co-operate and meet their training needs.

265. This situation highlights two important points. Firstly, there is a considerable mismatch in some cases between an establishment's own perception of the relationship it has with local industry and commerce, and industry's perception of the establishment's ability to meet its needs and its seriousness of intention in their direction.

266. Secondly, the differences between AE and FE in marketing to industry are considerable. In some cases, marketing to industry is neither relevant nor required, but in cases where industry is considered to be an important target, establishments face strong competition from other types of education provider, and will have to make concerted efforts to be taken seriously. Since time, staffing and financial resources are probably more stretched in AE even than in other sectors of education, the difficulty involved will doubtless not be underestimated.

'I think many of them are well-meaning, but they don't understand, or if they do understand they can't provide us with the sort of thing we want. The first thing they have got to do is to become much more commercial, to raise their sights dramatically'

'I doubt whether there is anything they could do really, I think they would find it difficult to design courses and attract us because we would always be able to find the same thing somewhere else'

267. Adult education providers were nonetheless praised (often very highly) by employers for their:

— obvious commitment to serving the needs of the community
— quality of education provision
— range of course offerings
— increasing awareness of the importance of marketing

268. The main criticisms expressed were in terms of a supposed failure to anticipate the needs of industry and commerce (e.g. forward planning), and a supposed failure to communicate with industry and commerce, not only through publicity materials and course leaflets, but also through a lack of personal contact or poor-quality personal contact.

269. Comments made about specific establishments include the following:

*East Warwickshire FE College, Rugby*

— college known locally for its good reputation
— employers interviewed had only sent staff on FE courses, not on AE courses
— college thought erratic in sending literature
— quality of literature good, content of courses good
— college 'too backward in coming forward' (lack of responsiveness?)
— college better at communicating with small companies than large ones

*Tower Hamlets Adult Education Institute*

— Institute perceived to be committed to serving community rather than industry, needs to be more industry-conscious
— prospectus and course leaflets received regularly, quality high, 'amazed' at range of course offerings
— staff described variously as 'laid back', 'undisciplined', 'scruffy'

*Friends Centre, Brighton*

— only 1 of 3 employers had sent staff to the Centre, was impressed
— 2 of 3 never received literature or been contacted
— awareness that Centre not orientated to business needs

*State Mill Centre, Rochdale*

— Centre very much in forefront of their minds
— Centre successfully meets their training needs
— publicity materials and course leaflets not much in evidence yet
— aware Centre makes good use of local media

*Adult Education Department, Hull University*

— employers had heard of Department, but had never used
— Department doesn't come to mind as a provider of AE
— course offerings known or thought to be not relevant to industry
— Department thought to be 'doing a good job', even though not relevant to their needs

*Holyrood School Community Education Dept, Chard*

— School has very high reputation locally, asset to community
— employers had not used and would not use the School, doesn't offer anything they need which cannot be found elsewhere
— School right not to target local industry

## Community organisations

270. Those interviewed included representatives of community associations and centres, resource centres, youth projects, and organisations representing specific ethnic and immigrant groups.

271. Almost without exception these organisations have an extremely high regard for Adult and Continuing Education, both as an institution and as a philosophy. The four main reasons for this are:

- a belief that AE serves the community in general
- a belief that AE promotes self-improvement of the individual
- a belief that AE aims to improve the quality of life of a community
- a belief that AE can assist the very people they themselves represent

272. In other words, AE is said to have the same aims and objectives as the organisations themselves.

> 'Our contact with them is a good model. It works because we are both voluntary agencies and we understand how each other works. We work together a lot. We couldn't function very well without them'

> 'I've already said we have the contact to find out what courses are available, and they are very good with us. They come here personally'

273. Contact and communication between Adult Education providers and community organisations is more extensive, more frequent, and of a higher quality at all levels than between Adult Education providers and industry. Clearly, Adult Education providers recognise community leaders and representatives of community organisations as a primary target.

274. Local community organisations tend to assess the performance of an Adult Education provider in a haphazard way, but often including one or more of the following elements:

- the quality of their teaching and provision
- the range of their course offerings
- the existence of courses directly relevant to their needs
- the extent, nature and quality of contact and communication with and by the establishment
- the extent to which the establishment attempts to identify the needs of individuals, and the community in general

> 'They send me lists of their courses so that we can send them to anyone who is interested'

> 'We have discussions with them about courses that we can help on'

'We do need guidance from the College and we need to draw on their experience as to how to go about it'

275. Their satisfaction with the performance of a particular Adult Education provider tends frequently to depend directly on two interrelated factors, these being:

— the economic and social health of the community in general
— the *extent* of lack of resources of the Adult Education provider

276. It appears that the more depressed an area is, the more that funding and resources, already always tight, become stretched.

'They're not adequately funded. They don't have enough money to start the courses that we want'

'I've had quite a good response from them but of course I've heard that their resources are extremely limited, so therefore they can't provide us with tutors for whatever we want'

277. On a superficial level it might be said that Tower Hamlets Adult Education Institute, for example, is more likely to be criticised than the Holyrood School in Chard for failing to meet the needs of their community. In reality, Tower Hamlets faces greater demands on its resources and capabilities. Both establishments are in fact probably performing equally well, within the constraints imposed on them.

278. Most community organisations and special interest groups are actively interested only in those courses specifically of benefit to the particular section of the community which they themselves represent. The question frequently asked is: 'What can they do for me?'

'I don't think they do enough for the elderly at the moment'

'Although they do help a little, it's not enough for my purposes. We would want to be seen as an important organisation'

279. Consequently, there is a widespread belief that resource allocation is biased, unjust or misplaced since resources cannot usually be made to stretch to serve all sectors of a community equally. The more pressing demands of the area, the more critical this becomes.

'I'd like to know how the colleges decide what courses they are going to put on'

280. Community organisations therefore often believe that Adult Education providers fail to assess priorities correctly when allocating resources. This serves to emphasise the great importance of going out into the community and maintaining as vigorous and wide-reaching a dialogue as possible.

'I think the AE service should have more representation from the community, more consultation. At the moment it's very much geared to what the providers feel is appropriate and very often there is a gap there'

'In the past they have not got in touch with the local people in the first place so they didn't know and didn't want to know what was needed. There is no way you will learn unless you get in touch with the people concerned with the problem. This (recent meeting) was the first time in the 20 years I've been here that I've been called to a meeting with them'

'I think they are doing everything they can, they are very good. I think there needs to be more fieldwork and outreach perhaps. It would be good to have a person appointed to go round making contact with people at home to talk over their requirements in a relaxed atmosphere'

281. Within this general framework, Adult Education establishments were widely praised for:

- their commitment to the community
- the quality of their teaching, and range of course offerings
- the quality of their publicity and course leaflets
- their increasing 'market orientation' in terms of assessing and attempting to meet the needs of the community
- the attitude of their staff (in the great majority of cases)
- the pleasant welcoming atmosphere at most of the establishments

282. Criticisms of Adult Education establishments were voiced in three main areas:

- insufficient promotional activity
- excessive bureaucracy
- the inability of some staff to relate to ethnic minorities or other specific groups within society

283. Insufficient promotional activity is a commonly voiced criticism. All of the establishments participating in the study do already have extensive literature and do develop and maintain a wide range of contacts within the communities they serve. However, it is possible that the issuing of publicity and course leaflets is unsystematic or does not always reach the right person.

'I think they could publicise the courses more. You can never have too much publicity'

'Why don't they do some videos and then show them around different places instead of these leaflet things? I imagine it would be a lot more effective'

284. Bureaucracy can act as a barrier to action. Most commonly the problem is thought by community leaders to be one of inertia: the system is thought to be unresponsive despite the best intentions of individuals working within it.

> 'As far as the Principal is concerned, he is a very eager man and wants to do something for the people here but, as I say, the system is not responsive to our needs'

285. The belief that some staff find it hard to relate to particular groups within society arises from a belief that people working in education have a middle-class outlook. As respondents put it:

> 'They are reluctant to get their hands dirty, so they never really find out what is needed'

> 'Some of the staff have been there for a long time so they don't always understand the needs of the groups which hitherto have been very low in profile'

> 'A lot of people are not committed to having a close relationship with the community. Some of the Heads of Department think it is their job to sit inside their office and when people have problems they have to go there to see them. I think a lot of them are not committed to coming out to find out what the community needs'

> 'I'm not sure about the timetabling but I'm positive about the courses offered and the way they are run. Any initiative they do take does not involve the community they are serving. It's OK someone sitting there deciding what people need, they need to involve themselves with the people to find out what they want'

> 'Good posters, regular publicity, keep the level down, keep the jargon down. I find that people in education, the further up the ladder they go, the more high-falutin' the language becomes and it's pointless trying to talk to the ordinary man on the street in this way because it just puts their backs up and they don't understand half the time'

286. Overall, community organisations are more interested, concerned and involved in Adult Education than are employers. At the same time, they are quicker both to praise and to criticise than employers from industry and commerce, who also have a high regard, but from a greater distance.

287. Comments about specific establishments include the following:

*East Warwickshire FE College, Rugby*

— College rated very highly in terms of contact, communication,

collaboration and provision of courses
- College may not produce enough course leaflets, other materials
- College may use a rather soft-sell approach

*Tower Hamlets Adult Education Institute*

- resources obviously unequal to the task
- need to consult more with community leaders, even though already doing so
- instances of planning courses together with community leaders were much welcomed
- tendency to appear to do nothing, despite strong consultative process

*Friends Centre, Brighton*

- very high opinions of attitude, atmosphere and performance
- impressive commitment to community
- Centre less inhibited about coming forward than statutory AE providers
- Centre co-operative and helpful over ventures by other organisations
- gives impression Centre knows what it wants, what it does best

*State Mill Centre, Rochdale*

- generally high opinion of Centre, but some respondents adopting a 'wait and see' attitude
- Centre poorly located
- Centre gives impression of concern, interest and responsiveness
- Centre has good profile in local media
- some respondents not receiving adequate printed information

*Adult Education Department, University of Hull*

- respondents had had limited contact with Department and limited use
- Department described by one as being 'hopelessly middle class'
- other respondents think Department does cater well for ordinary people
- respondents think Department might benefit from closer liaison with special interest groups, to complement its successful record with individual self-motivators

*Holyrood School Community Education Dept, Chard*

- Department thought to serve community extremely well
- described as being purposeful and successful
- impressive programme of events
- publicity material is of a high standard

# APPENDIX
# SAMPLE DETAILS

# SAMPLE DETAILS
# 1. PUBLIC ATTITUDES SURVEY

| | | *Rochdale* | *Somerset* | *Tower Hamlets* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Total* | | 99 | 100 | 99 |
| | | % | % | % |
| *Sex* | Male | 48 | 47 | 48 |
| | Female | 52 | 53 | 52 |
| *Age* | 16–17 | — | 3 | 3 |
| | 18–24 | 15 | 11 | 18 |
| | 25–34 | 22 | 20 | 21 |
| | 35–44 | 16 | 18 | 12 |
| | 45–54 | 18 | 15 | 10 |
| | 55–64 | 16 | 21 | 18 |
| | 65 and over | 12 | 12 | 17 |
| *Marital Status* | Single | 19 | 19 | 38 |
| | Married | 20 | 68 | 47 |
| | Widowed/divorced/ separated | 11 | 13 | 14 |
| *Social Grade* | AB | 18 | 12 | 3 |
| | C1 | 15 | 18 | 17 |
| | C2 | 25 | 36 | 16 |
| | D | 22 | 21 | 28 |
| | E | 19 | 13 | 35 |
| *Working Status* (Head of Household) | Full-time employment | 62 | 57 | 44 |
| | Part-time employment | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| | Unemployed | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| | Housewife | 3 | 2 | 15 |
| | Retired | 21 | 26 | 19 |
| *Household Composition* | Adults only | 57 | 49 | 60 |
| | Adults & infants | 6 | 4 | 3 |
| | Adults & children | 31 | 42 | 27 |
| | Adults/infants/ children | 6 | 5 | 10 |
| *Household Size* | One | 13 | 11 | 17 |
| | Two | 31 | 31 | 29 |
| | Three | 19 | 16 | 21 |
| | Four | 20 | 25 | 15 |
| | Five | 7 | 13 | 11 |
| | Six | 8 | 2 | 3 |
| | Seven or more | 1 | 2 | 3 |

| | | *Rochdale* % | *Somerset* % | *Tower Hamlets* % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Disabled Household members* | Yes – one or more | 6 | 2 | 10 |
| *Cars in household* | None | 44 | 20 | 65 |
| | One | 36 | 59 | 25 |
| | Two or more | 19 | 20 | 10 |

# SAMPLE DETAILS
# 2. COLLEGE INTERVIEWS

| | |
|---|---|
| *East Warwickshire FE College (Rugby)* | Engineering<br>Business Studies<br>Continuing Education<br>Course Organiser<br>Professional & Industrial Training<br>Student Services |
| *Tower Hamlets AE Institute* | Access Dept<br>Area Head<br>Area Head<br>Access Dept<br>Languages Dept<br>Creative Art Dept |
| *Friends Centre (Brighton)* | ESL Tutor<br>Project Co-ordinator<br>Tutor Organiser<br>Basic Education Co-ordinator<br>Tutor Organiser |
| *State Mill Centre (Rochdale)* | Guidance Services<br>Vocational Studies<br>Training Development Officer<br>New Technology Development Officer<br>Open Learning Co-ordinator |
| *AE School (University of Hull)* | Industrial Studies Unit<br>Professor of AE<br>Administrative Assistant<br>Administrative Assistant<br>Psychology Lecturer<br>Social Studies Lecturer |
| *Holyrood School, Chard (Somerset)* | Head of P.E.<br>CPVE Co-ordinator<br>Office Skills Instructor<br>Head of Sports<br>Adult Literacy Organiser<br>Community Education Worker |

# SAMPLE DETAILS
# 3. INDUSTRY/COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

| | |
|---|---|
| *Rugby* | |
| Engineering company | Personnel & Training Officer |
| Light engineering | Personnel Director |
| Volunteer action centre | Organiser |
| Age concern | Local Area Secretary |
| Horizon Club (Mental Health Day Centre) | Organiser |
| Turbine manufacturer | Training Manager |
| *Tower Hamlets* | |
| Chinese Welfare Project | Co-ordinator |
| Bangladeshi Parents Association | Teacher |
| Education Resource Centre | Development worker |
| Community Industries | YTS Projects Officer |
| London Dockland D.C. | Community Liaison Officer |
| Queen Victoria Seamans Rest | General Manager – Residential Mission |
| *Brighton* | |
| Brighton Council for Voluntary Services | Senior Development Officer |
| Neighbourhood Community Centre | Co-ordinator |
| Hotel | Assistant Manager (Personnel & Training) |
| Supermarket Chain | Training & Personnel Officer |
| Community Association | Neighbourhood worker |
| Department Store | Personnel Officer |
| *Rochdale* | |
| Curtain manufacturer | General Manager |
| Kashmiri Youth Project | Project Co-ordinator |
| Sportswear manufacturer | Director |
| Bangladeshi Community Project | Supervisor |
| Community Relations Council | Senior Welfare Officer |
| Advice Centre | Senior Welfare Rights Officer |
| *Hull* | |
| British Ports Company | Safety & Training Officer |
| Foods manufacturer | Training Manager |
| Community Care Association | Secretary |
| Community Playschemes Association | Co-ordinator |
| Gas Boiler manufacturer | Personnel Manager |
| Community Association | Secretary |

*Somerset*

| | |
|---|---|
| Primary School | Headmaster |
| Meat Packing Plant | Personnel Administrator |
| Agricultural Chemical Company | Personnel |
| Church of England | Vicar |
| British Legion | Local Organiser |
| Skirt manufacturer | Managing Director |

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## Objectives

The objects for which **The Further Education Unit (FEU)** is established are to promote, encourage and develop the efficient provision of further education in the United Kingdom and for that purpose:
a) to review and evaluate the range of existing further education curricula and programmes and to identify overlap, duplication, deficiencies and inconsistencies therein;
b) to determine priorities for action to improve the provision of further education and to make recommendations as to how such improvement can be effected;
c) to carry out studies in further education and to support investigations of and experimentation in, and the development of further education curricula and to contribute to and assist in the evaluation of initiatives in further education;
d) to disseminate and publish information and to assist in the dissemination and publication of information about recommendations for and experiments and developments in further education.

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